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Article (Accepted Version)

Swan, Elaine (2017) Postfeminist stylistics, work femininities and coaching: a multimodal study of a website. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24 (3). pp. 274-296. ISSN 0968-6673

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Postfeminist Stylistics, Work Femininities and Coaching: A multimodal study of a website

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine representations of work femininities on a British website offering coaching specifically aimed at women. It builds on and contributes to studies of postfeminist representations but with a specific focus on work femininities and coaching webpages. Although studies on postfeminist representation have analysed the way young women's, embodied and sexualised femininities are depicted across a wide variety of mainstream media, there has not been a study that focuses on the representation of work femininities on coaching websites. My approach matters because feminist authors critique popular psychology and link it to postfeminism and neoliberalism but as yet studies have focused on self-help books and magazines and not new media. Furthermore, coaching websites are an important medium for circulating postfeminist work femininities and psychological advice, produced through the digital labour of women entrepreneurs. Through my analysis of one website, influenced by feminist social semiotic multimodality literature, the paper contributes to postfeminist theory and organisation studies by explaining how 'postfeminist stylistics' reproduce postfeminist tropes and depictions of relational and individualised entrepreneurial femininities visually and textually (Lewis, 2014).

Introduction

The purpose of my paper is to use postfeminism as a critical concept to examine multimodal representations of work femininities on a British website offering coaching aimed at working women. As such, I respond to the call by Patricia Lewis (2014) for organisational scholars to mobilise the concept of postfeminism to examine multiple femininities in organisations. Whilst postfeminist theory maps the production of new and old femininities in postfeminist media such as films, TV programmes, and magazines, websites and coaching have not been analysed in much detail to date. This is of importance to organisational studies because the internet has become a significant site for the circulation of femininities

and feminisms, and the reproduction of cultural and social inequalities, created through, in part, the unpaid digital labour of women entrepreneurs.

Conceptually, coaching can be understood a part of therapeutic culture. Coaching literature, coaches and the coaching industry codes put great emphasis on distinguishing their approaches from therapy for reasons beyond the scope of paper. I use the term therapeutic culture more broadly to position coaching than how coaches define therapy, in line with other theorists, to describe a cultural formation which circulates psychological discourses and techniques for solving work and life problems, and found in self-help, personal development, emotional intelligence, make-over and reality TV, and growing in cultural potency (Author, 2004). Whilst postfeminist scholars study how cultural representations of popular psychology, few focus on coaching. Hence, the aim of my paper is to start to address theoretical and empirical gaps and study coaching for women as a postfeminist practice, which constructs work femininities through multimodal semiotic resources and psychological themes.

In so doing, this paper contributes to scholarship on postfeminist representations and postfeminist organisational studies in a number of ways. First, although postfeminist studies have analysed how working femininities are represented, there has not been a study that focuses on coaching, multimodality and websites. Websites are a specific form of media which contribute to the negotiation of meanings about postfeminism, sustain new forms of women' labour and are the product of wider cultural and social shifts such as neoliberalism. Hence, the paper contributes to our understanding of how representations of postfeminist work femininities are produced through textual and visual strategies. Secondly, I provide additional insight on the topic by applying Lewis' (2014) concepts of relational and individualised entrepreneurial femininity to a coaching website, amplifying her point that femininity is structured in relation to masculinity but also other racialised and classed femininities. To do this I analyse a single case study of a coaching website aimed at women. This focus allows me to make a third contribution through an innovative methodology. Whilst there is an emergent subfield of website studies in organisation studies, how gender, class, race and whiteness are figured multimodally has been somewhat neglected (Elliott and Robinson, 2014; Mescher, Benschop, and Doorewaard, 2010). By focusing on one website and its webpages, I show how representations of work femininities are created through what I call 'postfeminist stylistics', a patterning of visual artefacts and verbal text which signify

postfeminist tropes. Thus, the paper makes a methodological and conceptual contribution to studies of the representations of postfeminist work femininities.

A relatively new industry, and occupational group, coaching has proliferated phenomenally in the last ten years with coaches and their accrediting bodies working in countries such as US, UK, Germany, Scandinavia, Australia and Asia (George, 2013; Author). In coaching advertising and practitioner literature, coaches attempt to distinguish different forms of coaching in relation to their purpose and intent: lifestyle, executive, business, performance, and career, to name but a few. Hence, broadly speaking, life coaching is presented as more individually focused and aimed at a change in life or career; executive coaching is understood as organisationally focused on strategic decision making; and performance coaching on improving productivity and effectiveness. Coaching aimed at women uses this terminology but profiles maternity coaching, aimed at so-called women returners and the 'challenges' they face; and career coaching, focused on the specific needs of women's career management. In practice, definitions across webpages blur. Furthermore, coaches report using similar tools and psychological approaches for all kinds of coaching, noting that coachees determine the focus for coaching and often want to discuss personal issues, regardless of what may have been commissioned by human resource departments (Author). Indeed, whilst the webpages I analyse cover a range of types of career and work focused coaching, they brand them as 'life coaching'.

Practitioners claim that coaching is a more 'facilitative' or 'non-directive' relationship than training or consulting, relying less on business expertise than on the interpersonal expertise of listening and questioning. Feminist research insists that these ways of performing coaching are gendered, racialised and classed (Author; George, 2013; Graf and Pawelczyk, 2014; Pawelzyk and Graf, 2011). Even when business improvement constitutes the aim of coaching, coaches deploy interpersonal skills culturally associated with 'women's talk' (Graf and Pawelczyk, 2014; Pawelzyk and Graf, 2011), and recommend their development for their coachees (Nikolova et al., 2013). As such, coaching resonates with Patricia Lewis' definition of the construction of 'relational entrepreneurial femininity', in which feminine ways of behaving such as empathy, listening, and empowerment are valorised as relevant business and entrepreneurial skills. Indeed, whilst coaches market themselves in terms of culturally feminised behaviours, they also emphasise more masculine attributes and ideals (George, 2013; Author). By drawing on cultural

feminisation strategies, coaching represents part of the shift to 'gender as work' and therefore an important site for postfeminist organisational studies (Adkins, 2001; Lewis, 2014).

The relationship, however, between coaching, postfeminism, and popular psychology, with a few exceptions, has yet to be made. Nevertheless, core tenets of postfeminism - individualism, choice, self-invention, makeovers - are the staples of popular psychology (Baker, 2010; Gill, 2007, 2008; Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009; Author). Consequently, postfeminist scholars emphasise that postfeminism constructs middle-class, white women as the 'ur' malleable, self-transforming subject. Hence, such women are incited to self-manage, self-discipline, and self-regulate all aspects of their conduct unlike middle-class white men. Such self-work is the project of middle-class white women economically in that they have the income to be able to purchase self-improvement services and culturally because middle-class, white women are positioned through postfeminist ideas of individualism, potential, emotional control, and self-disciplining interiority, what we might call 'psychological capital' (Baker, 2010; Blackman, 2004, 2005, 2007; Pfister, 1997). Seen as having a 'proper subjectivity', middle-class white women are constructed in opposition to racially minoritised and working white women, who are culturally seen as less willing, and less able to reinvent themselves, possessing shallow, and more defective 'psychologies' (Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 2002; 2004; Steedman, 2002). Postfeminism evacuates class and race from its meaning-making, idealising white middle-class femininity, and pathologising racialised and working class Others (Wilkes, 2015); although as critical race theorists emphasise this does not mean that all postfeminist culture is white or Western (Baker, 2010; Dosekun, 2015; Lazar, 2006).

Postfeminism and popular psychology both fetishise individual agency. Thus, popular psychology de-socialises and depoliticises women's understanding of themselves, and their problems through ideas symbiotic with the hyper-individualising tendencies of postfeminism. In this vein, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff stress that individualism in postfeminism has 'almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political, or any idea of individuals as subject to pressures, constraints or influence from outside themselves' (2011: 7). Moreover, coaching's preoccupation with self-transformation makes it a significant site for examining postfeminism. Therapeutic culture promulgates the idea that women's minds, emotions, careers, lives and bodies can all do with a makeover, reinforcing white

middle-class feminised characteristics of malleability and flexibility (Author; Gill, 2008). Indeed, psychological discourses underpin makeover expertise (Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008: 227; Gill, 2008). A question then is how coaching media reproduce such ideas through the notion of a 'psychic makeover' (Cameron, 1995).

At the same time, feminist theorists argue that therapeutic culture, however problematic, offers middle-class women resources to cope with the impossible demands of postfeminism and neoliberalism. Hence, women need psychological resources to live with the pressures of performing 'successful femininity'; enduring the costs and injuries of 'propping up' postfeminism; and undertaking the self-work needed to become the never-ending, self-improving, independent subject (Baker, 2010; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008: 227). Incessant calls for self-responsibilisation and transformation have punitive effects. Thus, feminists acknowledge that psychological practices provide restorative resources which can furnish women with the 'skills to succeed and manage the constant reinvention, instability and precarity' (Aapola, Gonick & Harris 2005, cited Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008: 231) papering over the cracks caused by the neoliberalism's fracturing of long term support (Walkerdine and Ringrose, 2008: 35). Hence, they reproduce intimacy, friendship, and emotional sustenance once met by friends and family (George, 2013; Author).

The problem is that therapeutic culture reinforces a constantly failing feminine subject, pathologising dependence, unrealistically valorising agency and blaming difficulties as personal inadequacies (Walkerdine et al., 2001). The psychologisation of social problems, and gendered, racialised and classed inequalities such as the unequal division of labour in the home, sexism, racism, heteronormativity and poverty become the fault of individual women. Women are expected to solve impossible, unmanageable problems with inadequate responses like positive energy, effort and self-work. Hence, coaching can be understood as a response to, and reinforcement of the 'psycho-logical economies' produced under neoliberalism and postfeminism (Blackman, 2004; Sennett, 1998).

Against this backdrop, in this paper, I draw upon these critiques of postfeminism, neoliberalism and psychology to analyse how the webpages construct work relational entrepreneurial femininity through visual and verbal resources. In particular, I draw on literature which stresses that popular psychology reproduces middle-class white femininity, and studies on how to analyse class, gender and whiteness through visual and verbal texts (Author; Liu and Barker, 2015; Zhang,

Gajjala, and Watkins, 2012). To bring together my argument, I structure the paper as follows: first, I provide a summary of feminist studies and critiques of self-help and postfeminist psychology, and an overview of the emergency sociology of coaching, which highlight femininities, feminism and failure, all of which will inform my analysis of the coaching webpages. I detail my methodology and theoretical framework before providing a close reading of the webpage for *Jessica Chivers* which promotes coaching services for women.

Feminism and Therapeutic Culture

Coaching constitutes part of the intensification and proliferation of therapeutic practices that aim at transforming individuals, and subject to extensive feminist critique (Author; Cameron, 1995; 2000; Cloud, 1998; Ilouz, 1997, 2007, 2008; McGee, 2005). Feminists agree that psychological and therapeutic ways of talking and acting have proliferated across a number of social domains, from education, work, and popular media through to the state (Ilouz, 1997, 2007, 2008; Moskowitz, 2001; Madson, and Ytre-Arne, 2012). Increasingly, we are encouraged to understand our selves and others; our problems, and solutions to these problems, through psychologistic and therapeutic vocabularies and techniques. Typically, racially minoritised and working class people are forced to do so by state institutions, and the middle-classes take them up voluntarily as part of work commitments or through outside work activities (Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 2004; Steedman, 2002). As a result, psychology in its various permutations has intensive cultural authority as a form of expert knowledge (Rimke, 2000).

Theorists disagree, however, on the political and cultural effects of therapeutic culture. For many, psychological vocabularies degenerate our way of thinking about our lives and ourselves because we de-politicise, individualise and emotivise our problems and their solutions . In essence, we are encouraged to psychologise what is sociological. Other theorists are less damning of the turn to the psychological, or at least try to understand how and why women mobilise therapeutic concepts and whether this leads to political, social and individual transformation. Indeed, second wave feminism and psychology are inextricably linked: some authors arguing that popular psychology enabled feminism to become more influential in women's everyday lives (Peck, 1995; Moskowitz, 2001). Furthermore, feminism and psychology have 'rhetorical continuities' and common ground in the role of self-reflexivity and the family as a site of change (Ilouz, 2008; Moskowitz, 2001). The

term 'therapeutic feminism' has been coined to characterise the most psychologised, de-politicised version of feminism, which ignore structural causes and systematic inequalities and encourages individualism, positivity, and self-empowerment (Rosen, 2000).

To date, much of the work on popular psychology by feminists examines self-help books, particularly those about sex, relationships and careers because self-help represents the heart of 'therapeutic culture of the self' (Knudson, 2013). Most studies focus on textual analysis rather than readers' practices and produce swingeing critiques. Many are Foucauldian and unwavering in their view that self-help discourses align with the political objectives of neo-liberalism: self-responsibilisation, autonomy, and productivity (Hazleden, 2003; Philip, 2009; Rimke, 2000). Whilst seeming to be about the self then, self-help literature reconfigures the social as self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-discipline become ways to control citizenship and produce responsibility. Authority and expertise are of particular concern in these studies because self-help experts claim to have 'the keys, the habits, the tools and secrets.... to 'remedy' the psychological causes of one's failures, disappointments and frustrations' (Rimke, 2000: 69). Complex social problems rendered psychological in origin and effect are solvable through 'enough reading, guidance, determination and industriousness' (2000: 73). People are persuaded they can control and master their lives, perpetuating a model of hyper-individualism, and refuting relationality (Cherry 2008; Rimke, 2000).

In contrast to textual studies, feminists undertaking audience reception analyses are interested in how women read self-help books, and whether this reading leads to feminist activism (Grodin, 1991, 1995; Knudson, 2013; McGee, 2005; Rapping, 1997; Simonds, 1992, 1996). They show that readers are critical of self-help books but value the expert authors for their personal disclosure and experiential knowledge. Books most enjoyed by readers promote autonomy, offering new gendered behaviours (Grodin, 1991, 1995). For some commentators, tenets of self-help such as self-determination and self-fulfilment 'might be tapped for a progressive, even a radical, agenda', constituting a proto-political form of feminism (Crowley 2011; Simonds, 1992) (McGee, 2005: 24). Moreover, the very prevalence of the books suggests women are not doing idealised femininity properly and so need to be instructed how to (Cameron, 1995). In spite of some optimism, feminist authors agree that self-help books circulate damaging ideals about femininity, women's malleability, and 'psychic makeovers'. Self-help psychology teaches women they need to perfect their

psyches as well as their bodies, perpetuating a project of endless impossible improvement. Women are taught to 'privatize, individualize, and pathologize' their problems rather than to understand them as shared, structural inequalities (Lerner, 1990 cited Grodin, 1991). Very little seems to change in self-help literature, as a study of recent self-help career books concludes they reinforce unequal gender relations (Kenny and Bell, 2014). At their worst, self-help represents the 'silent borrowing' of feminist concepts and the 'hijacking' of the women's movement by capitalism (Hochschild, 1994).

Women's magazines, another feminine medium, circulate postfeminist psychological advice to women. For instance, analysing German *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Kati Kauppinen (2013) argues that advice aimed at career women promotes a 'discourse of postfeminist self-management' that evokes both feminism and neoliberalism. A goal oriented ethos mobilising expert strategies, mantras and tips, the goal for women is to achieve not just everyday success but 'maximal success' and 'full power'. As Kauppinen notes, the advice offered may be sound but reproduces an image of 'power femininity', a woman who independently, confidently and competently manages her life (Lazar, 2006 cited Kauppinen, 2013). Power femininity is a souped up notion of the self-made subject which keeps going against the odds, striving for success, managing her burnout and benefitting her organisation. Thus, in invoking ideals of empowerment, agency and control, the discourse of postfeminist self-management incites women to commit to a neoliberal world of work, naturalising its precarity. As such, the psychology in the magazine represents 'a gender-specific neoliberal governance,' whereby feminism is co-opted in the service of producing entrepreneurial subjects. on the one hand this discourse evokes an ethos of feminist engagement, on the other, seeks to guide readers to mould themselves into a version of the entrepreneurial self required by the neoliberalised world of work.

In another take on the reconfiguring of femininity through popular psychological relationship advice in women's magazines and self-help, Lisa Blackman discusses the construction of 'the self-made woman', a subject closely related to power femininity and individualised entrepreneurial femininity (2004, 2005, and 2007). In such advice, one becomes a 'self-made woman' by transforming psychologically in order to become independent and in control, refuting needs for security, and emotional closeness. Characterised as not needing others, the self-made subject makes things happen through her own hard work, belief in herself and positivity, a

description that fits with postfeminist definitions of individualised entrepreneurial femininity. Problems of social existence such as losing one's job, health, beauty, relationships, and friendships become understood simply as 'stimuli for self-improvement'. Self-help endorsed by magazines may seem feminist at first glance, but encourages women to get by with little support. Indeed, several authors argue that self-help encourages an emotional detachment from others and pathologises dependence, a stance that fits with psychology needed for neoliberalism (Hochschild, 1994; Rimke, 2000; Sennett, 1998).

In this final section, I introduce an emergent feminist literature on coaching, an important intervention in the self-congratulatory practitioner literature. Drawing on research on North American life coaches, Molly George (2013) stresses that freelance coaches try to promote and professionalise what they do because people do not know what coaching entails, partly because it lacks a codified body of knowledge. Hence, coaches sell themselves through their personal characteristics and experiences, bolstered by industry credentials and standards. Women coaches are further challenged because they sell listening and advising, which are coded as feminine emotional labour and usually accessed free. Unlike professionals who have esoteric or accredited expertise, the curriculum of life coaches is the everyday and they have to convince customers to buy their services, and to see them as more helpful than 'free' advice or listening offered by family and friends. To promote their services, coaches work hard at cultivating professional and credible impressions. Women dominate the coaching industry and the pulling off of professionalism is gendered with men more associated with abstract knowledge and technical competence, and women with interpersonal skills. Indeed, Eva-Maria Graf and Joanna Pawelczyk (2014) argue that coaching promotes a feminine gendered self because it draws on 'symbolically feminine discourse'. Drawing on conversational analysis of coaching practices, they show how coaches reproduce modes of talking that are culturally associated with women's intimate private friendships and feminine styles of talk. Such talk includes sharing feelings and personal problems, being facilitative, empathetic and supportive, and avoiding an expert role: all of which characterise relational entrepreneurial femininity (Pawelczyk and Graf, 2011: 273; McLeod and Wright 2009; Author).

The relational femininity of therapeutic culture is gendered, classed and racialised. Therapeutic culture valorises the psychological and emotional styles of middle-classness and whiteness and these forms of capital are unevenly distributed

economically, socially and culturally (Bo-Chen Wei et al., 2014; Ilouz, 1997; Lawler, 2005; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2009). For example, being middle-class means not being 'overwhelmed by emotional necessity and intensity' and therefore able to produce emotional self-control in the workplace (Ilouz, 1997: 56). Middle-class white emotional norms are valued because they are structured by the exclusion of classed and racialised others (Ilouz, 1997; Pfister, 1997; Skeggs, 2009). In this vein, Suvi Salmenniemi and Maria Adamson (2015) argue that popular psychology creates symbolic hierarchies by attaching value to middle-class women who are able to reproduce self-help narratives, and thus construct Others as lacking value. As Blackman notes, 'the stories of [women] who cannot or who are unable to achieve ... success, stand as cautionary tales, marked out as pathological and seen to lack the psychological and emotional capacities to effect their own self-transformation (2004: 223). Being able to claim possession of proper psychological capital enables the white middle-classes to demand the right to lead in the workplace (Pfister, 1997).

Addressing the issue of class and coaching head on, Katariina Makinen (2014) stresses that forms of coaching aimed at people who unemployed and at middle-class professionals are both preoccupied with promoting the ideal subject of neoliberal individualism: autonomous, and atomized, full of capacities and limitless power, who 'makes their own future'. This not a feminised relational subject but a white masculine middle-class self (Skeggs, 2004; Author). Indeed, she suggests that failure not success is at the heart of coaching because coaches need to acknowledge subjects' failures in order to sell their services and imply that no one's individuality is quite good enough. As a result, coaching has a 'shadow self', needy and helpless, more feminised, in danger of losing itself and slipping out of control. The shadow self is everything the ideal individual is not, and thus, represents racialised and classed Others, historically excluded from constructions of autonomous individuality. Thus, coaching exacerbates feelings of insecurity and precarity, feeding off failure and fear. Individuality not only 'conceals class' but is haunted by precariousness, with women in particular seen as 'fatally insecure' (McRobbie. 2008 cited Kauppinen, 2014: 833). In this discussion on failure, the focus is on class and gender, and not race, an under-researched issue in studies of popular psychology. As Joel Pfister wrote some time ago: 'What still needs to be investigated is the degree to which ... modern 'therapeutic' discourses [and modes of communication], while often presuming to fathom and repair universal 'human nature,' have in fact contributed ideologically to the normative racial construction of whiteness' (1997:

36). An issue I consider as part of my analysis, drawing on visual analyses of gender, race and whiteness.

Methodology

From my review of the literature on postfeminism and popular psychology, and Lewis' study of entrepreneurial femininities, my overall research question became how do the webpages for Jessica Chivers' coaching represent postfeminist work femininities multimodally? How are they classed and racialised? How much do the webpages refute or promote relational entrepreneurial femininity and independence and distance advocated in self-help? To start to address these questions I focus on a case study of a single website in this paper drawn from a wider international study of coaching twenty webpages on coaching aimed at women in the workplace and interviews with coaches. I located the websites through a Google search for coaching for women accessed in the period April 2015 to January 2016. Whilst many websites offer coaching for men and women, only a few focus specifically on providing coaching for women. My criteria for selecting the Chivers website as my case study for analysis in this paper were in line with other single case study analyses (Holman, 2004; Author, forthcoming) in that it was visually striking and hence conducive to a visual analysis, and exemplified a number of themes in the academic literature. The site clearly targeted women and represented itself as feminist.

Focusing on one website provides a different kind of data from analysing a series of websites, and in this paper I wanted to do a close, fine-grained reading of the multimodal meaning making practices of the various visual, textual and interactive modes to examine postfeminist femininities. My focus was on the semiotic resources and their meaning-making potential, and not the production, consumption, interpretation or distribution of the site (Author). Semiotic resources do not have fixed meaning but provide meaning potential that can be activated. Given my study is of representations of coaching, I did not study situated coaching practices nor gather the views of the coach or her clients. Indeed, I want to emphasise that when I analyse the represented coach and her 'voice', it is as a represented participant or imagined author addressing an imagined addressee rather than as a real person with lived experiences (Adami, 2014). Therefore, the webpages cannot be seen as representative of Jessica Chivers' thinking.

Analysing websites presents challenges (Author). Websites are multimodal media which bring together different semiotic modes such as graphics, photographs,

videos, sounds, drawings and cartoons and texts (Pauwels 2005; Cranny-Francis 2005). Thus, webpages are distinct 'hybrid' genres with digital, verbal, aural, kinetic and visual meaning-making modes which have particular affordances. These modes work independently but also make meaning potential through interacting in combinations. Webpages are image-led and so typography, layout, colour become important in meaning-making. Hence, a sole focus on textual analyses is limited because visual meanings extend, elaborate or contradict textual meanings, and vice versa.

Theoretical framing of analysis

To mediate these issues, and address my research questions, I drew on methodological texts on websites and feminist studies of webpages focused on gender and race, largely influenced by social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis (Daniels, 2016; Lazar, 2004, 2007; Moran and Lee, 2013; De Gregorio-Godeo, 2009). Feminist social semiotically inflected multimodal analysis moves beyond semiotic analysis to interrogate the power relations in meaning making: for example, in reproducing ideologies about postfeminism, neoliberalism, capitalism, gender, class and race. Each mode has its own resources, potentials and limitations for making meaning and offers distinctive ways of representing and constructing the world. Visual and verbal texts work representationally; interactionally; and compositionally (Kress and Leeuwen 2006). Thus, coaching webpages represents the world of coaching, creates imagined interactions between represented coach and viewer, and constitutes a recognizable genre such as a webpage. Multi-modal semiotic approaches are not 'rigid maps but descriptive frameworks' (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001) and just the first step in analysis, enabling descriptions of analytic categories such as colour or angles, and explanatory categories like and interpersonality but they call for other theoretical approaches to enable wider social and political interpretations (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). The key is to move beyond the 'textual bias' and privileging of language often found in internet research and towards a 'hybrid media analysis' (Pauwels, 2005). Hence, my analytical strategies drew on social semiotics and multimodal analysis but also postfeminist theory, sociological and cultural theories of therapeutic culture, and entailed following steps but also to-ing and fro-ing, stopping and starting, pausing and staring in an eclectic, iterative and craft-like approach.

Method and Sampling

Drawing on frameworks employed by the authors named above I undertook a textual and visual analysis of the all of the pages of the *Jessica Chivers* website accessed from April 2015 and January 2016. I selected a sample of these pages as the data for the present study.

Stage one: Collection and first impressions. I viewed the webpages on the internet, and took screenshots which I labelled and printed, and stored on a computer. These comprised the data set for this paper. I noted points of interest in relation to representations of psychology, postfeminism, femininities , and developed preliminary codes.

Stage two: Analysis of the big picture and smaller sections in detail. I pulled together analytic processes using these recursively rather than in linear fashion (Adami 2014, 2015; Pauwels, 2005; Cranny-Francis 2005; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996;). I drew on the following pointers below to varying degrees of detail.

- What is the webpage's subgenre function and purpose ;
- How does the internal appearance and design of the webpages look?
- What topics are covered by the verbal and visual texts, and how do these relate to therapeutic culture and reproduce ideas about gender, race, and whiteness? How are three meta-semiotic functions of modes: representation, interaction and composition represented visually and textually (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996)? Representation focuses on how images, colour and language represent inner and physical worlds, actions, events or symbolic concepts; Interaction focuses on how images and language enact imaginary relationships between represented participants and imagined viewers (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 193-4).

Codes such as relational femininity, problem-solution, decontextualisation, whiteness and psychological tropes were generated from the literature review, methodological literature and webpages. Analyses of whiteness in visual cultures stress its complexity because it is both seen and unseen, and performed through stylised visual conventions and cultural scripts which circulate to normalise whiteness across a range of media, including webpages (Author; Liu and Barker, 2015; Zhang, Gajjala, and Watkins, 2012). As bell hooks (1996) argues white feminists writing about images of white women too often universalise this specific historical subject as 'woman' (cited Zhang, Gajjala, and Watkins, 2012).

Stage three: Analysis of how the overall look, mood and feel of the webpage: and how values, and taste are expressed aesthetically and address particular viewers in gendered, classed and racialised ways (Adami 2014; Rose, 2012).

Stage four: Analysis of how the webpage and its modes are shaped by and reproductive of wider relations of power?

Ethics of website analysis

The ethical questions of studying webpages are still being processed. New media research experts, Myrrh Domingo and colleagues (2014) citing the UK ESRC Ethics Framework (2010) suggest Studies should focus on authors' public online identities and not their 'off-line' lives, from well-established webpages with authors who have a media presence, deliberating managing an-online identity for income. All of these criteria fit my selection of the webpages for Jessica Chivers. That said, influenced by feminist research ethics, I obtained permission from Jessica Chivers to use screen shots in the paper. Furthermore, I worked at not objectifying Chivers by analysing how the website depicted the imagined coach not the real person; and discussing socially circulating semiotic resources and not an individual's motivations or beliefs.

Findings

The purpose of the webpage is to promote coaching services of the represented coach (RC) to individual women and to Human Resource departments which commission coaching for women and persuade them to buy coaching from the RC. From the start the webpages address women verbally and visually through what I call 'postfeminist stylistics', a particular range of verbal and visual design. As a promotional website, it is hybrid- providing information about coaching, self-help, work issues, and reports from the media. The coaching services aims specifically at three groups: women who want to run their own businesses, women who are returning to work after having been on maternity leave and women who want to review their careers. As a promotion website, it is, like most advertisements, structured by a 'problem-solution format' in which imagined viewers are addressed as if they had particular problems, with the solutions being the product or services being promoted. Problem-solution formats are not 'value-free' but are ideological 'containers' which carry specific types of problematisations and therefore embedded with them are certain 'inevitable' solutions, often reproducing neoliberal values (Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2004). Part of my analysis focuses on how the website enacts the problem-solution format in relation to postfeminism and psychology, much of which focuses on the way in which the RC is constructed as a credible

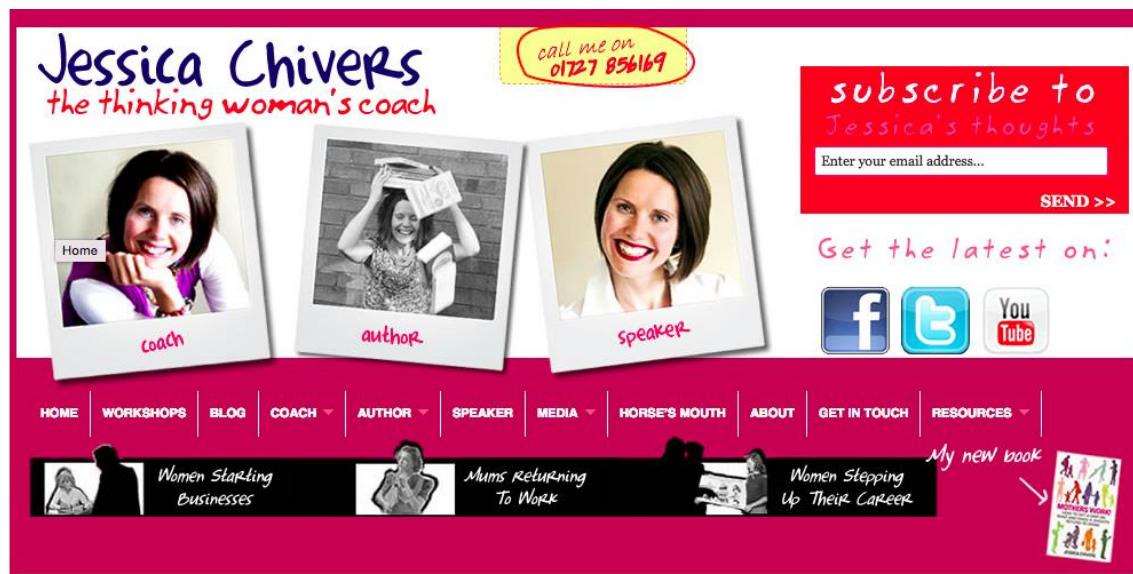
persona.

The webpages have to persuade viewers that that coaching is a sensible solution to the problems of women's entrepreneurship, maternity leave and careers. And which feminist theory would problematize quite differently through concepts of neoliberalism, gendered division of labour, sexism, privatization of care etc. As the literature review shows coaching is a feminised entrepreneurial practice focused on communication practices associated with relational entrepreneurial femininity. The webpages have to explain and promote relational femininity and distinguish it from everyday unpaid women's emotional labour. Mediating rapport and expertise is not easy. In her discussion on self-help expertise, Koay Dong Liang (2015) reveals how self-help book authors tread a careful line between positioning themselves as being non-judgmental, fostering closeness, and building rapport, and at the same time, revealing evidence of experiential and credentialised expertise, including a personal history of relationship and career success. In similar vein, experts in makeover culture in magazines and on TV perform a communication style of feminine relationality, performing intimacy, connection and empathy to 'create a sense of a close-knit, intimate community of women with shared interests and concerns...characterized by friendship and care', or what has been called 'synthetic sisterhood' (Frith, Raisborough and Klein, 2010: 477). I show below how the webpages construct this sense of synthetic sisterhood through photographs, gaze and visual relatability on to connect the RC intimately with viewers.

Relational entrepreneurial femininity

Figure one below shows the top of the homepage, 'the entry point' to the webpage and where viewers are oriented, the website voice established and most important information placed (Grumbein and Goodman, 2015). Although viewers do not read webpages in a linear fashion (Kress, 2004), it is likely that top of the homepage will be the first multimodal resources viewers see. The placement and arrangement of text, headings, images, links and information in a website inflect their meaning.

Figure one: Screen shot of top of homepage



In terms of visual design, there is a lot packed into a small space. Although the verbal text is limited to one word labels or short phrases, most of these are interactive links – 23 in fact. There are interactive external links to social media links to facebook, youtube and twitter; and the other verbal and image internal links take the viewer to other parts of the webpages. The link to the RP's book goes to Amazon. As a result, the links offered by the webpages are recursive and self-referential, limiting connections to a narrow range of ideas about work femininities. There are over ten different fonts, in different weights, colours and sizes of font. The verbal text is highly varied in grammatical structure with an array of imperatives such as 'get the latest', 'subscribe', 'get in touch', 'call me', typical of advertising, which attempt to get viewers to interact. .

This small section of the homepage shown in figure one performs a number of functions: establish and legitimate the RC as a friendly expert on working women's issues; provide more detailed information about her services and promote action in viewers in order to secure sales. Even in this brief section, through its visual and textual design, the website targets white middle-class heterosexual working women with children. As figure one shows, the 'imagined viewer' is addressed from this early point as if they identify with middle-class values of education and cultural capital through the verbal subheading: *The Thinking Woman's Coach*. As viewers move across the subsequent pages, the website represents whiteness, middle-classness and heteronormativity through its visual and verbal references to economic and cultural capital and activities: playing the piano, running, going to the gym, , being involved in local politics, eating certain kinds of foods and performing

traditional gendered divisions of labour. In one webpage on resources, there are external links to a youtube of Sheryl Sandberg the CEO of google, author of *Lean In* and the Bossy new media campaign, seen by feminists as the quintessential white postfeminist icon, who individualises empowerment and ignores classism, racism and sexism (Daniels, 2014; Pham, 2015; Rottenberg, 2014).

Figure two: Screen shot of photographs



Turning now to the photographs of the coach: The first images the viewer sees are three photographs of the RC's broadly smiling face, made to resemble polaroids, as if just placed in an informal 'higgledy piggly' fashion. There are two professional, studio-shot, close ups in colour of the RC's white feminine face, gaze and smile. Designers attempt to create interactional meanings through the angle of the shot, and the proximity to and type of gaze of the person in the image (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 135–53). Thus, portraits photographs with direct close up gaze and detailed facial features are regularly used in visual design to introduce individuality, personality and emotionality. In this vein, in the photograph labelled 'coach', the RC appears warm, friendly, listening attentively with her broad smile, warm direct eye-contact, slightly messed-up hair, and brightly coloured clothes. The photograph has a realistic modality because of its lighting and shadows. Thus, the RC is shown to personify the relational entrepreneurial femininity which many coaches use to sell coaching and perform in practice. As well as representing the RC, images perform a type of interpersonal image-act (like a speech act) suggestive of particular relations and imaginary contact between the RC and the imagined viewer. Thus, the eye-level gaze by the RC makes a 'demand' of the viewer; the close up gives a sense of an intimate relationship and frontal angles encourage the viewer to feel involved and

on the same terms as the RC (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). Together the visual grammar works to 'invite' the viewer to imagine themselves sharing their personal concerns with the RC and operates visually to produce a sense of feminine connection, and identification produced through synthetic sisterhood.

The middle photograph sandwiched in between the two shows a torso shot in black and white of the RC balancing books on her head and laughing. This signifies an 'offer' image-act because the RC is viewed from a distance, without direct gaze, and hence the viewer can observe in a more detached and impersonal way as if being given information about the RC. The RC is shown as a fun, informal, relaxed woman to whom viewers can relate; the image metaphorising the postfeminist tropes of work-life balance and 'the juggling act', a reference to how women manage the conflicts between professional, domestic and leisure lives (Nathanson, 2015). The typography corroborates the images of relational entrepreneurial femininity adding to the creation of synthetic sisterhood with its notions of feminine intimacy and shared feminine concerns. Van Leeuwen (2006) analyses distinctive features of typography such as the weight, expansion, slope, curvature, connectivity and regularity of typefaces. Much of the typography on the webpages resembles a spontaneous, informal handwritten style, with sloping, curved, round fonts suggestive of a 'woman's touch', friendliness, approachability and femininity (ibid.).

As discussed, women coaches have to show that coaching is skilled work and in this vein, the top of the homepage attempts to add more masculinised expertise to the relational entrepreneurial femininity. Accordingly, the coach's professional public roles are highlighted by the labels on the photographs - speaker, coach, and author - with hyperlinks to media coverage of the RC's work, feedback from coaching clients and experience and qualifications. These work to reinforce the sense of the RC's work success and her expertise on working women's issues.

As a result of the configuring of photographs, verbal text and interactivity, the RC is depicted as a successful career woman and empathetic coach and importantly, as a role model for coaching. Visually, this is achieved by the positioning of this information at the top of the homepage. Layout is meaningful and ideological. In Western media, elements in the upper section of pages depict the 'ideal': the dream, aspiration or the promise (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). This contrasts with the 'real' at the bottom of pages, focused on specific, down to earth or practical information. Psychological cultural intermediaries need to embody the practices they sell and position themselves as the idealised endpoint or telos of the services

they promote (Author). Shown as carefully and fully made-up, hair well-groomed, happy, the RC is revealed as a multi-tasking, high achiever in her professional life and offering a point of identification for viewers as the promise or 'after' of coaching, the successful, individualised and relational entrepreneurial feminine subject. Thus, in this position at the top of the page, the photographs of the RC work to offer 'a window to a future self' (Iqani, 2009).

Feminine Othering

Indeed, the webpages build a cumulative image of the RC as the 'after' subject of the makeover. For instance, the image and text below, in figure three, which can be found on the webpage on the RC's coaching background, references are made to being 'sorted' and postfeminist white neoliberal affects of positivity, zest and optimism, corroborated by the bright coloured letters (Negra, 2009). The verbal text states that coaching does not feel like work, naturalising the performance of relational entrepreneurial femininity. The section on the life behind the coach underlines British white-middle class cultural capital through the references to BBC 3 radio, the film *The English Patient*, and middle-brow media commentators such as Giles Coren and Claire Fox. Here is a further example from the RC's blog: 'In my case as long as I can run/spin three times a week, eat breakfast in peace (an increasingly rare event) whilst soaking up intellectual stimulation in form of BBC R4 podcast, copy of *The Psychologist* or *The Times* AND play a bit of piano, I'm happy'.

Figure three: Screenshot of background to RC

The Motivation Behind the Coach

I'm a pretty sorted individual, with a knack for making lemonade when others might see only lemons. I'm the rational optimist who sees glasses half full and about to be topped up. And it's this, along with my zest, warmth and creativity that make me a stimulating coach. I take immense pride in doing a job I love and making a difference to people's view of themselves and their capabilities. Making people feel good and equipping them with a mindset to achieve personal and professional aspirations is something I do almost by osmosis. It never feels like work and that's why I coach.

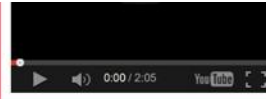


For HR women and corporate souls amongst you my Myers-Briggs personality type, "ENFJ" is a good description of me:

"Warm and enthusiastic. Highly attuned to the emotions, needs and motivations of others. Finds potential in everyone, acting as a catalyst for individual and group growth. May provide inspiring leadership and like to facilitate others."

The Life Behind The Coach

I'm a keen runner and community-minded helper, wife to a talented man and mother of two children with minds of their own. My favourite gadget is the Dyson vacuum cleaner (my love of which gets discussed without fail every time I'm on BBC3 Counties radio) and although I always thought I'd grow up and own a cat, have been pontificating about a dog for some time. The most played track on my ipod is *Take Me to the Clouds Above* by LMC vs. U2 (perfect running tempo) although for downtime *The English Patient* soundtrack is a favourite. I love seafood and tinned custard, although not at the same time and certainly not *tinned* custard at my fantasy dinner party where amongst others *Claire Fox*, *Giles Coren*, Jo Brand, Matt Ridley and David Attenborough would be guests. I live in Hertfordshire and love to be beside the rugged Cornish coast when I'm not here. One day I hope to see the summit of Everest with my own eyes, live by the sea and do a PhD.



Although postfeminist media appear to ignore racial and classed differences in their setting up of synthetic sisterhood, they actually construct visual and topic exclusions (del Teso-Craviotto, 2006). As discussed, the imagined viewer is being constructed on the website as if she is a white, middle-class, heterosexual, married, working mother who can afford to buy, or is in an organisational position to access, individualised coaching services. The website creates a sense of the hierarchisation and exclusion of femininities by class, age and race through visual and textual Othering. 'Othering is produced through the absence of types of other types of femininity and lifestyles, and the definition of relational femininity in opposition to visual representations of othered femininities. The webpages construct this distinction explicitly through the use of a black and white image shown in figure four of two ethnically marked older women talking and listening outside on a bench to which the RP's listening is contrasted. As George notes, relational entrepreneurial femininity, if too naturalised and every day, can be seen as the unskilled, unprofessional domestic work of women. The photograph in figure four serves to stress the white middle-class quality of the RC's listening skills by presenting domestic feminine relationality as the antithesis of professional listening and relationality. I will develop this theme of Othered femininity more below after introducing the notion of postfeminist stylistics, in so doing extend Lewis' point that work femininities need not simply be understood in relation to masculinity.

Figure four: Screen shot of listening image



Postfeminist Stylistics

In this section, I highlight a patterned use of visual language which I call postfeminist stylistics. This represents an aesthetics which reproduces postfeminist tropes through visual and verbal design for example, colour, typeface, images and lexis. In essence, bright colour codes postfeminist themes. For example, in figure five, a screenshot shows that a prominent image of a book cover, a big arrow, again as if quickly handwritten, linking to the RC's book entitled '*Mothers Work!: How to Get a Grip on Guilt and Make a Smooth Return to Work*' is positioned at the top of the homepage next to the photographs of the RC.

Figure five: Screenshot of book cover



The design illustrates a number of postfeminist stylistics and themes. The book cover depicts brightly coloured silhouettes of slim youthful women in heels with babies and toddlers and a title in large pink lettering, all imagery associated with chick-lit and postfeminist self-help books (Montoro, 2012), and . signifying white, middle-class maternal femininity- slim, energetic, cheerful and youthful (Krueger, 2014). Whilst theorists have analysed postfeminist representations of makeover

programmes and films, with a specific focus on plot, formats and discourses, a few scholars stress that postfeminist femininities are depicted visually and in particular, colour-coded. Indeed, colour partakes in the invocation and construction of gender roles and attributes (Anderson et al, 2015). In particular, saturated, bright primary colours- especially pink- are used in popular culture to articulate meanings about postfeminism and femininity (Koller, 2008; Hamad, 2010; Montoro, 2012). For example, Roio Montoro (2012) shows that bold colours and line drawings are part of 'chicklit' and deployed to encode fun, confidence, and independence. On the Chivers' webpages, the colour red dominates the webpages and when read in relation to other modes connotes energy, fun, and excitement; all associated with neoliberal affect (Adami, 2014). The drawing of the handbag in figure six represents another prominent example of a colour coded postfeminist image. the handbag is coded as expensive and hyper-feminine through its shape and design, and signals values of postfeminist consumerist femininity, wealth, class and light frivolity and stands in opposition to the staid, masculine work briefcase. .

Figure six: Screenshot of handbag



The use of brightly coloured line drawings is not the only form of postfeminist stylistics on the webpages as they also mobilise black and white retro images and clichés of women's freedom, both used in other postfeminist media. To categorise types of women who need coaching, images shown in Figure seven, taken from stock photograph repositories reference Hollywood melodramas, a feminised genre, and show women with worried emotional expressions, some flanked by blacked out silhouettes of men, and one of a 1950s housewife overawed by a large ticking clock.

Figure seven: Screenshot of black and white images on coaching links



In social semiotics, such images represent these women as generic ‘types’ rather than as individuals, because of their unreal modality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). The black and white images are associated with traditional, repressed and insecure over-emotional femininities, encode the ‘before’ subject of the coaching makeover.

Another postfeminist stylistic is the use of women against decontextualised backgrounds, a tactic which can promote postfeminism and neoliberal values (Moran and Lee, 2013). Thus, images on the webpages rarely show women against concrete backgrounds, thus giving the effect of erasing socio-economic and cultural contexts, as if society does not matter, reinforcing a message that universalises certain feminine values as timeless. This visual effect renders invisible the socio-economic conditions of post Fordism, the gendering and privatisation of domestic care, and sexism at work which mean that women have to start businesses and find ways to return to work or manage their careers. In addition, women are shown on their own, isolated from other women, in spite of the apparent promotion of relationality through synthetic sisterhood. The over-semioticisation of women on their own promotes the postfeminist value of individualism rather than collectivism. A good example in figure nine visually depicts the outcome of coaching, and next to text which says that women will feel ‘mentally powered up like a jumping bean’ after being coached.

Figure eight : Screen shot of women jumping into mid air

This sounds really good, can I afford it?

My fees for 1:1 coaching allow me to work with a broad range of women with discounts for women who don't have a corporate sponsor.

As one client said, coaching time was the best money she'd ever spent on herself. And it's no wonder when you go away feeling mentally powered up like this jumping bean. (I'm happy for you to leap about if you feel that good but you're not obliged).

Typically women without a corporate sponsor invest £300 in coaching time with me. I also run several free career comeback coaching and maternity comeback coaching workshops throughout the year. [Take a look here.](#)

Share this:




WordPress Site Designed By Mum's Got Talent [RSS Feed](#) [Log in](#)

*Share what's on your mind
hello@jessiechivers.com*

The image does not represent a concrete solution to the challenges working women face. As David Machin (2004) writes, the photographic cliché of a jumping woman in a stock photograph with no background apart from the blue sky constructs freedom as a subjective experience, expressing vitality and exhilaration, through bodily movement, but not as a political belief. As he explains, 'freedom is not ideological, not something that needs to be protected or fought for. It is a mood, a passing feeling, expressed by jumping or other physical activities, and a concept drawing on 'new age' ideas of serenity and simplicity' (Machin, 2004: 332). In this way, the image concurs with other semiotic resources on the webpages such as colour and text to depict neoliberal affects of optimism and energy, and women abstracted from other women and social or economic context. Thus, the problems hinted at in the images and text on the webpages are real issues of inequality, precarity, sexism and discrimination, but are not framed visually or textually as such (Peck, 1995). Thus, the website recognises 'the injuries and already lived psychopathologies of white middle-class femininity' however it constrains the explanations (Blackman, 2007; Peck, 1995).

Postfeminist Psychology

In this section, I explore how postfeminism, femininity and psychology are intertwined textually through vocabulary, syntax and form which reference self-help and popular psychology. As a result, precarious labour, systemic inequalities, the unequal distribution of domestic labour, individualism and self-responsibilisation are constructed across the webpages as postfeminist and psychological issues of juggling work-life balance, faulty feelings, lack of confidence and self-esteem, lack of

hobbies, making assumptions, being fearful, feeling overwhelmed, and not making the best of what you have. To promote problems and solutions in this way, the website mobilises a patchwork of different psychologies - behaviourist, positive and humanist - and presents these not as 'schools of thought' but through maxims, mantras, bullet point tips, and imperatives, all formats in popular psychology. Whilst the website feminises and informalises coaching, describing it as a 'conversation' and a 'pleasure', two-way, informal and open-ended, it also depicts coaching as a universal solution which can address generic women's issues to do with 'minds, bodies, work and personal relationships'. Hence, all areas of women's lives are open for individual improvement, part of psychology's 'generosity' (Author; Rose, 1989). And yet, whilst coaching is framed as an informal, friendly process in which the coach does not impose expertise - 'I.. believe my coachees are their own 'best expert' - the website offers extensive psychologically informed advice to the imagined viewer. Typically this is in the form of imperatives: for example, 'see your family as a team'; 'get a grip on guilt'; go for 'good enough' at home; 'get organised for a smooth return'; 'do what it takes to thrive'; and interrogatives: fearful?: what are you assuming?; Self doubt? Grip it and use it. These work to reinforcing the RC's expertise and encouraging the imagined viewer to take action. The solutions are brief, snappy and unreflexive, with no ambivalence, and already coded in individualised, psychologised lexis, again abstracted from any social explanation, transmuting complex problems into generic, already-framed solutions. All problems are depicted in the same style in terms of structure, lexis, and discourse, are uniform and standardised, most written as emotives, reinforcing a popular psychological discourse in which feelings represent the truth of the self, and reference postfeminist language like self-esteem and empowerment.

■ **I feel stuck** in the job I'm in – I really not sure what a good next step would be

■ **I have a very difficult relationship** with my line manager and I want help finding a way through

■ I've just moved back to the UK from America and **I feel lost**, especially now I'm a parent

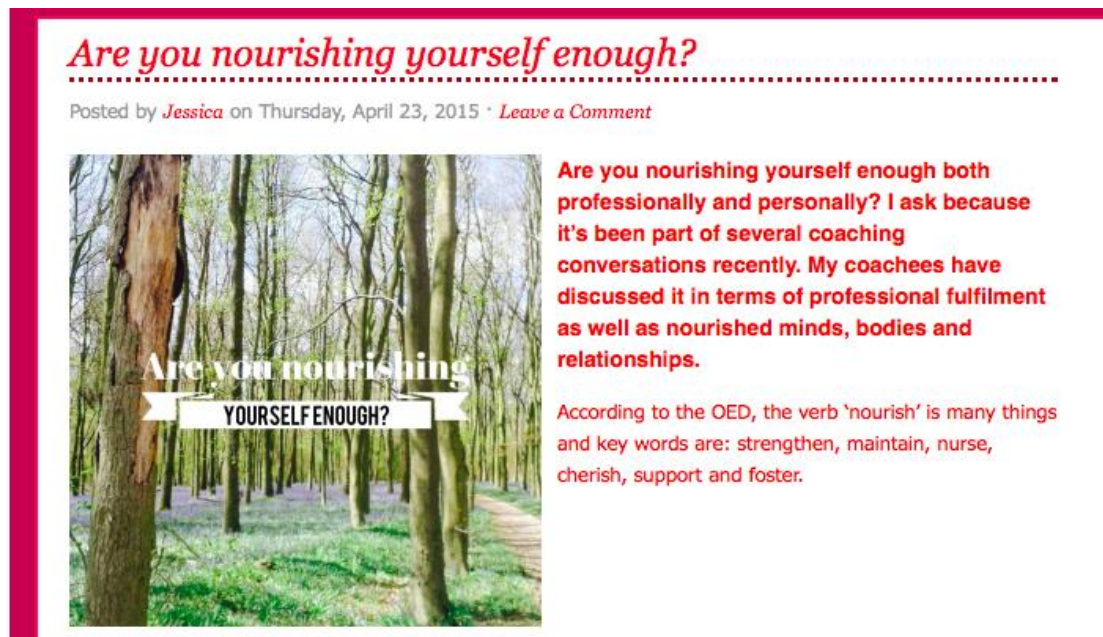
■ **I'm worn out** from work – I'm working until 10/11pm at night and that can't be right

■ I've been line managing a team of five for 2 years and **I still feel like an imposter**

■ **I feel anxious** about going back to work after maternity leave

I turn to a more detailed analysis of these themes in the next section in a more extended blog post on nourishing in figure nine.

Figure nine: Screenshot of nourishing blog



The text again is in red and flanked by a large photograph of trees in a brightly lit wood, with more blue sky, imagery associated with personal growth, and optimism. At first glance, the imagined viewer is being asked to reverse feminised caring roles and to take care of herself and points to the real issues women face in getting care and time for themselves. Indeed, self-care is central to self-help and postfeminism (Lazar 2006; Negra, 2009; Hazleden, 2003). Further links connect to text on professional nourishment, nourished minds, nourished relationships, and nourished bodies. Each section offers a short personalised first person introduction by the RC, followed by a series of bullet point psychological tips, written as imperatives. For example:

- have lunch with a colleague you admire;
- do peer coaching/shadowing/mentoring conversations;
- hold your next team meeting in an art gallery or green space;
- look for the best of intentions in colleagues;

- smile more when answering the phone or in meetings;
- use the 'soft-no' technique to keep relationships intact and protect yourself from taking on more work.

The nourishing mind section offers an additional 13 bullet pointed tips: spend time on what you're good at; notice people's strengths; be with people that make you laugh; detach from people who 'drain', record what's going well every day, and write thank you postcards. 13 more tips are provided for nourishing relationships at work, personally and in the family. Described as 'small and significant ways', these include being positive and attentive, smiling, touching, noticing, empathising and listening without interruption, and taking care of 'him'.

The tips stress an intensification of traditional, relational femininity. Thus, self-care turns into more self-work as the blog repetitively incites us to care for others (O'Grady, 2004). Hence, women who are interpellated visually and textually on the website as having complex lives and demands on their time are encouraged to perform more emotional labour in the affective registers of neoliberalism and postfeminism: optimism, cheerfulness and poise (Negra, 2009). The emotionality required represents middle-class white femininity - smiling, attentive, facilitating others, being positive, and less assertive, developing a 'soft-no'. The exemplary upbeat emotions steering away from the 'rough emotions' such as anger, frustration, failure, and disappointment and which motivated the second-wave feminist and civil right movements (Negra, 2009). Rather than being asked to detach from emotional bonds and become more independent as in the self-help books analysed by Hochschild (1994), the imagined viewer is encouraged to work harder at re-attaching to family, friends and colleagues, 'warming' up her relational femininity. As the website puts it, 'build[ing] bonds as well as esteem'. Whilst postfeminist media encourage individualised femininity women must not become too independent, but 'retraditionalised' through a neoliberalism which requires 'hyper-engagement with the needs and concerns of others (Blackman, 2007; Negra, 2008)'.

In terms of postfeminist stylistics, the website constructs psychological advice as tips, bullet points and lists. The psychological genre of 'tip' can be found in self-help books, women's magazines and other forms of feminine culture. Tips and maxims can be useful for women, generating capacities and attentiveness to the self (Heyes 2006; Valverde, 2004). But, tips can be hackneyed, manipulative and self-serving, reproducing its own commercial interests. In that tips do not provide 'a blue print for life', which might be more useful practically. Indeed, coaching does not have a

'blue-print' or codified knowledge base, unlike forms of counselling or therapy, and can be understood as postmodern bricolage of tips and techniques (George, 2013; Author). Visually, bullet points and lists are 'easily digestible', visually repetitive and impactful, producing a series out of unordered, unsequenced and incoherent set of materials, meaning that complex processes are abstracted and fragmented (Djonow and Van Leeuwen, 2013; Ledin and Machin, 2015). Importantly, they do not encourage reflection, unlike other forms of therapy, consciousness raising or feminine friendships.

Whilst the website encourages us to imagine coaching as a conversation between women friends, it becomes a series of unforgiving, impossible imperatives: abrupt and almost 'fired at us'. The sheer quantity of tips and imperatives underlines an incitement to the 'micro-management of absolutes', and the impossibility of its achievement (Sedgwick cited Lury, 1997). In contrast to self-help authors studied by Hazleden who depict prescribed tasks as being painful and demanding, the websites suggest that we just need to follow the tips, without engaging in any meaningful reflexivity or depth, bypassing self-knowledge for the postfeminist sensibility of optimism, getting on and making do and associated with middle-class white femininity. Furthermore, the tips point to problems and solutions which do not characterise the social situations or difficulties that face racialised and working class women (Heyes, 2014).

Hyperactive Femininity and Digital Labour

But as Makinen (2014) argues there is shadow side to coaching, a subject presented as 'slipping out of control'. This comes in the form of a 'mood' of hyperactive femininity, an effect of the aesthetics and feel of the webpages' composition and expressive content, and connotative of the postfeminist ideal of having it all (Adami, 2014; Rose, 2002). Gillian Rose argues that the mood or atmosphere of an image is difficult to explain but evoked through its visual composition. The feeling of hyperactive femininity is provoked by there being too much going on and too much to make sense of on the website. More specifically, the reading path through the webpages is hectic, and dizzying, reinforcing a sense of too much to do. In terms of the visual composition of layout, forms of interactivity, use of colour, fonts and framing devices such as shapes, size and number of segments, the webpages are dense, busy, chaotic and hyperactive. Significantly, the webpages deploy too much of the colour red. In multimodal terms, red can connote energy, determination and fun, but the over-semioticisation of red on the website creates a sense of intensity,

urgency, and over-excitement which is not relaxing or restful. Colour is key to the expressive function and feel of a multimodal text, often evoking strong emotions (Kress and Leeuwen 2006: 233) and even indexing 'an era, a culture, an institution' (Van Leeuwen, 2011: 65). Hence, studying colour is studying the social (Albers, 2006 cited Anderson, Vuori, and Guillane, 2015). Thus, the colour red on the webpages connotes the bold, confident, energetic and striving individualised entrepreneurial self of neoliberalism. But this exuberant, hyperactive self required by neoliberalism tips over feelings of anxiety and mania (Hickinbottom-Brawn, 2013; Martin, 2007).

Other modes on the webpages corroborate these associations: Textually, the website reproduces several accounts of the RC's hectic, full leisure, home and professional life. In the blog, there are 'curated personal sharing' (Duffy and Hund, 2015) confessionals, with one entitled 'A personal story of overwhelm and how I am handling it'. The RC reports in the first person how she experienced a 'complete overwhelm' and narrates her feeling of being out of control. Writing of trying to enjoy her leisure time, she says: 'But there is just TOO MUCH TO DO; I am overcommitted and there's just no spare capacity. She then recounts how trying to overcome her sense of having too much to do by using psychological techniques, things gets worse when she has to take care of her mother who has alcoholic induced dementia. A profoundly sad read, the RC is not the poised, cheerful role model but in despair, crying in public and finding solace from strangers, it reveals the duress of women's caring responsibilities and ideals of unrealistic expectations with diminished support. Although the story is presented as one in which even such problems are amenable to tips, techniques and rationalisation to get back on an even keel.

The feel of hyperactive femininity on the webpages relates directly to the social impossibility of having it all and the self-work needed to pull it off. It highlights the shadow of the individualised entrepreneurial femininity - the precarious, harried, relentless self-promoting, and 'fatally insecure' subject discussed in theories on postfeminism, and neoliberalism, and off which popular psychology and coaching feed (McRobbie, 2008 cited Makinen, 2014: 833). Hence the webpages construct a narrative of the RC trying to hold everything together and keep going whilst trying to have it all, and powering through potential burn out as in postfeminist 'power femininity' (Kauppinen, 2015). As such the atmosphere of hyperactivity evoked by the webpage works symbolically. but it also points to the social practices, predicaments and inequalities of women's entrepreneurial and digital labour. Women coaches are mostly freelance entrepreneurs, often so-called mumpreneurs,

running their own businesses from home, and to sell their business, they have to undertake unpaid digital labour to produce their self –branding (Duffy and Hund, 2015; Luckman, 2015; Pham, 2015).

Conclusion

My aim in this paper was to respond to Lewis' (2014) call for studies of postfeminism and work femininities. I contribute to literature on postfeminist representations and studies of work femininities through the concept of postfeminism by adding a multimodal analysis of a website to reveal how the webpages construct these through mobilising visual postfeminist visuals, tropes and clichés, which I call postfeminist stylistics. I demonstrate how the look and feel of the webpages constructs a sense of hyperactivity which visually and verbally points to the idea of failed femininities, and stresses the multiple forms of feminine labour – emotional work, self-work, caring work and digital labour - in as discussed in feminist literature on postfeminist media and popular psychology. Labour being what entwines postfeminism, neoliberalism and popular psychology (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2014). The paper adds insights into Lewis' description of relational and individualised entrepreneurial femininities by showing how relational entrepreneurial femininity was visually and verbally constructed through representations of synthetic sisterhood, racial and classed Othered femininities, and intensified emotional labour, reinforcing cultural ideas about whiteness, neoliberal affect and classed, racialised, and gendered psychological capital. In particular, I showed how the individualised entrepreneurial femininity is founded on an erasure of the social and political.

Hence, the website reproduced problem-solution formats which acknowledges women's inequalities but erases the social, political and economic explanations for the constraints and barriers women face. Social and cultural constraints and difficulties such as the unequal division of labour at home, privatisation of child care, lack of societal support at work for working mothers, physical exhaustion and lack of leisure time, and the injuries of neoliberalism and heteronormativity are largely 'repudiated' and 'silenced' and reconfigured as matters of individual emotional labour and habits, skills now required by neoliberal workplaces (Baker, 2010). Thus, I reveal how the solutions on offer are individualised, tactical, fragmented and technique based: the opposite of feminist consciousness raising or collective action. Indeed, as is typical of postfeminist media, the webpages do not mention men and their role in childcare, domestic labour or supporting careers in

the workplace and neither do they discuss women's potential collectivism, activism or even friendship and support and how these might mediate the problems faced.

Of course, popular psychology persistently fails to produce social analysis, but my study applies the concept of postfeminist stylistics to demonstrate how postfeminist meanings are produced multimodally on the webpage. Thus, whilst only one case study, my analysis contributes new ways for work femininities and work psychology to be analysed through the concept of postfeminism. As I emphasised, such analyses do not tell us about the intentions, thinking or lived experiences of coaches, but they do help us to see how postfeminism circulates through new media, and reproduces its themes not only through verbal text but visually and aesthetically.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the reviewers, and editors for their careful, attentive reviewing and editing, and Dr Ilaria Vanni for helping my thinking.

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